

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /082 W
-----051725 190729Z /13

R 190140Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8909
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0069

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1, 4 DIMPTD
TAGS: PDEV EAID PROP PDIP LA MY
SUBJECT: LAO-MALAYSIAN RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION: THERE FOLLOWS AN OVERVIEW OF MALAYSIAN-LAO RELATIONS DRAWN FROM OBSERVATIONS MADE BY A SENIOR DIPLOMAT IN THE MALAYSIAN EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE. SUBSEQUENT MESSAGES WILL DEAL WITH LAO RELATIONS WITH EACH OF THE OTHER ASEAN STATES. WE WILL SUBMIT A FINAL MESSAGE SUMMARIZING LAO-ASEAN RELATIONS. END INTRODUCTION.

1. MALAYSIAN-LAO RELATIONS HAVE LITTLE PRACTICAL RELEVANCE FOR EITHER COUNTRY. THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA REGARDS VIETNAM, AUGMENTED BY SOVIET SUPPORT, AS POSING THE GREATEST THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IT ALSO VIEWS LPDR FOREIGN POLICY (AND TO A SOMEWHAT LESSER EXTENT, DOMESTIC POLICY) AS BEING

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UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SRV. THIS PERSPECTIVE FORMS THE FRAMEWORK IN WHICH CURRENT MALAYSIAN-LAO RELATIONS ARE SET.

2. "MINOR IRRITANTS" IN MALAYSIAN-LAO RELATIONS CONSIST OF 1) LAO "MORAL SUPPORT" FOR COMMUNIST INSURGENTS IN MALAYSIA, AND 2) LAO PRESS CRITICISM OF JOINT THAI-

MALAYSIAN BORDER OPERATIONS. THE MALAYSIAN PROPOSAL FOR A "ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY" IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA, WHICH THE LAO STRONGLY OPPOSED IN THE 1976 COLOMBO CONFERENCE OF NON-ALIGNED NATIONS, HAS BEEN QUIETLY SHELVED.

3. THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA HAS INFORMED THE LAO GOVERNMENT THAT IT IS WILLING TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO ANY LAO REQUEST FOR AID WHICH LIES IN THE TECHNICAL COMPETENCE OF MALAYSIA. UP TO THE PRESENT TIME, THE LAO HAVE MADE NO RESPONSE TO THIS OFFER. AN INVITATION FOR LAO FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUNE SIPRASEUTH TO VISIT MALAYSIA IS ALSO OUTSTANDING. THE INVITATION WAS ISSUED DURING THE MAY VISIT OF MALAYSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER RITHAUDDEEN TO VIENTIANE. WHILE THE LAO AGREED IN PRINCIPLE THAT PHOUNE SHOULD MAKE THE TRIP, NO DATE WAS SET, NOR HAS ANY GROUNDWORK FOR A VISIT BEEN INITIATED.

MALAYSIA, DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF SUBSTANTIVE RELATIONS WITH LAOS, BELIEVES THAT IT IS THE MOST "PROGRESSIVE" AMONG THE ASEAN STATES IN PURSUING IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH LAOS AND THE OTHER STATES OF INDOCHINA. AS EVIDENCE OF THIS THE MALAYSIANS CITE FOREIGN MINISTER RITHAUDDEEN'S VISIT TO THE THREE INDO-CHINESE STATES IN 1977 AND NGUYEN DUY TRINH'S AND IENG CONFIDENTIAL

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SARY'S VISITS TO KUALA LUMPUR. THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA IS AWARE THAT IT IS THE ONLY ASEAN STATE TO MAINTAIN A MISSION IN VIENTIANE AT THE CHARGE LEVEL. A "CABINET PAPER" HAS BEEN PREPARED URGING THE DISPATCH OF AN AMBASSADOR TO VIENTIANE, BUT THERE IS AS YET NO INDICATION THAT A MALAYSIAN AMBASSADOR IS TO BE ASSIGNED TO VIENTIANE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

5. THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING MAKING A RESPONSE TO THE RECENT LPDR EMERGENCY DROUGHT APPEAL, BUT IT IS FIRST CONSULTING WITH BANGKOK TO ASSURE THAT ITS RESPONSE IS IN PROPORTION WITH THE RESPONSE OF OTHER ASEAN STATES AND THAT ITS RESPONSE IS ACCEPTABLE TO OTHER ASEAN STATES, SPECIFICALLY TO THE THAI. THIS MALAYSIAN CAUTION DERIVED FROM SOME INFORMAL CRITICISM LEVELED AT MALAYSIA BY INDONESIA FOLLOWING THE FORMER'S DECISION TO ASSIST THE SRV IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VIETNAMESE RUBBER INDUSTRY. THE INDONESIANS SUGGESTED THIS WAS STRATEGIC AID.

6. COMMENT: THE MALAYSIAN EMBASSY IS STAFFED WITH RELATIVELY YOUNG, PERSONABLE DIPLOMATS WHO HAVE EXERTED

MORE EFFORT AND HAD MORE SUCCESS THAN SOME IN DEVELOPING CONTACTS AMONG THE LAO. THE MALAYSIAN CHARGE HAS VIGOROUSLY COMPLAINED TO THE LAO OVER LAO PRESS ATTACKS ON JOINT THAI-MALAYSIAN BORDER OPERATIONS, BUT THIS DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE DAMAGED THE EMBASSY'S RELATIONS WITH THE LAO FOREIGN MINISTRY. THE MALAYSIANS ARE VERY MUCH WITHIN THE ASEAN DIPLOMATIC CIRCLE HERE, PARTICIPATING REGULARLY IN ASEAN SOIREES AND ENGAGING IN CLOSE CONSULTATIONS WITH THEIR ASEAN COLLEAGUES. THE EMBASSY HAS ALSO MAINTAINED EXCELLENT SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS WITH THE AUSTRALIAN AND U.S. EMBASSIES.
ROBERTS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VIENTI00069
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780028-0415
Format: TEL
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780143/aaaabjxd.tel
Line Count: 128
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
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Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3744562
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAO-MALAYSIAN RELATIONS INTRODUCTION: THERE FOLLOWS AN OVERVIEW OF MALAYSIAN- LAO RELATIONS DRAWN FROM OBSERVATIONS MADE BY A SE
TAGS: PDEV, EAID, PROP, PDIP, LA, MY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a42cc7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014